

by the *biirgcrmeister*. Blind people were shut in an inclosed space in the market place with a pig as a prize, which they were to beat with sticks. The fun was greatest when they struck each other. This amusement is reported from many places in central Europe.<sup>1</sup> " Nothing amused our ancestors more than these blind encounters. Even kings took part at these burlesque representations." At Paris they were presented every year at mid-lent.<sup>2</sup>

665. Women in the theater and on the stage. No young women were allowed to be present at the *commedia del arte* in the first times of the principate at Florence. Masi<sup>3</sup> says that this was true in general of all Italy. Later they were addressed in the prologue, which became customary, and so they must have been present. Popular opinion still held that they ought to stay at home, as of old. They were never on the stage. De Julieville says <sup>4</sup> that women in France in the Middle Ages were present at the freest farces. In the middle of the sixteenth century, in Italy, wandering players began to employ women for female parts. The Italian comedians, when they went to Paris, continued this custom there.<sup>5</sup> Philip II of Spain forbade women on the stage.<sup>6</sup> French actresses appeared at London in 1629; they were allowed in 1659.<sup>7</sup> Innocent XI, in 1676, forbade the employment of women on the stage.<sup>8</sup>

666. The "*commedia del arte*." In Italy the *commedia del arte* was the continuation or revival of the *mimus*. The speeches were impromptu; the characters and roles were stereotyped. The action and speeches must have grown by the contributions of talented men who played the parts from generation to generation. The characters have become traditional

and universal.<sup>9</sup>

Such were Maccus (later Polichinella) of Naples,  
Manducus or

<sup>1</sup> Barthold, *Hansa*, III, 177.

<sup>2</sup> Lacroix, *Manners, Customs, and Dress of M. A.*, 220;  
Schultz, *Z>. Z.*, 409?

Scherr, *Kult. Gesch.*, 623.

<sup>5</sup> Scherillo, *La Commedia del  
Arte*, 72;

<sup>3</sup> *Teatro TtaL nel Sec. XVIII*, 232.

*Roguery*, 159.

<sup>6</sup> Chandler, *Romances of  
Roguery*, 159.

\* *Comedie en France au M. A.*, 23.

<sup>8</sup> D'Ancona, *Origins del Teatro in Italia*, I, 341.

<sup>9</sup> Burckhardt, *Die Renaissance*, 318. In Gozzi's *Memoirs* (ed.  
Symonds) may

be seen good colored plates representing these fixed characters  
of the *commedia  
del arte*.